



News Release

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Radiation update: minuscule levels of material from Japan declining in state

OLYMPIA — State health department monitoring shows the trace levels of radioactive iodine from Japan are dropping in Washington. The Department of Health testing for the material in air, rainwater, and milk shows no public health risk.

State health officials began looking for radioactive iodine in the air after the nuclear reactor March emergency in Japan; trace levels of radiation in our state were expected. On March 20 a very low trace level of radioactive iodine (I-131) was detected in an air sample from the Seattle-area monitor. [Levels have sharply declined](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/japan/iodine.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/japan/iodine.htm) since.

This monitoring is in addition to the routine air monitoring around the state for the normal background radiation; levels of this radiation have not increased and remain in a normal range. Radioactive iodine is not part of the natural background radiation found in the environment, and is evidence that small amounts of radiation from Japan have come to our state.

“We understand that some people in our state are concerned about what’s happening in Japan,” said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. “We’re keeping a close watch for radioactive materials that could affect Washington. It’s important to note that all of the detections we’ve had in our state are far below any level of health concern.”

Once I-131 was detected in air samples, state health officials started [testing rainwater](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/japan/rainwater.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/japan/rainwater.htm), too. Low levels detected in Seattle-area rainwater have steadily declined. To verify the rainwater detection, several samples from cistern drinking water supplies in the state were tested and showed even lower traces of radioactive iodine, confirming it’s not a health threat in the water. The test results are on the agency’s [Japan earthquake website](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/japan2011.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/japan2011.htm).

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The state also tests milk for radiation from around the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, monthly. The latest test was completed today and the result was below the limit of detection for I-131, confirming that radiation is not a health threat in Washington milk.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently reported minuscule levels of radioactive iodine in one milk sample from the Spokane area while a sample from the Tacoma area showed no detectable iodine. [EPA issued a statement on April 4 updating its test results](http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/d0cf6618525a9efb85257359003fb69d/f118f3b38ec3748d8525786900020035!OpenDocument) (<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/d0cf6618525a9efb85257359003fb69d/f118f3b38ec3748d8525786900020035!OpenDocument>).

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Visit the Washington Department of Health website at http://www.doh.wa.gov for <i>a healthy dose of information</i> .
